

1/26 You think Chelsea and the Flatiron are lousy with cranes? Dubai, O Best Beloveds, Dubai. A quarter of the world's cantilevers abide there.



Seven thousand years ago, this was mangrove swamp. In the age of trade, neither a caravansary along the Incense Road nor even part of Felix Arabia, per se. But oil – and even the prospect of gas – creates its own attars, its own paths to and from the desert, its own modes of expression. Its distinct grand projects.

A thousand cranes, a thousand cranes – good fortune!

But when it comes to slaughter

You will do your work on water,

An' you'll lick the bloomin' boots of 'im that's got it.

And 'oo does got it, ay?

The cover photo of the *Messenger's* Magazine Section features a giant thumb and forefinger squeezing a bright red jujube-sized Continental U.S. superimposed with the words: *Who Shrunk the Superpower?* And the subhead: *Waving Goodbye to Hegemony.*

Adieu tristesse. Or is it bonjour? I don't know why you say goodbye, I say hello.

Hegemony.

Hedge money.

What a difference an e makes, Gød, as ever, inhabiting the details.

Ah, Venus's companion, the one you saw the other day at dawn, turns out to be Jupiter. Optically, they're converging. Send out a wish for clear mornings.

No one's talking about why it lost power and propulsion, nor what its fuel source was, nor how large exactly "large" is, nor where it's likely to land, but word is out that a dysfunctional U.S. spy satellite – and it's a biggie – has slipped out of orbit and is due back home – surprise! – with a bang or a splash some time in late February or early March.

Sois tranquille Henny Penny, sois tranquille. Winners have yet to be announced.

Yes, and if memory serves, the *axe historique* also passes through Neuilly-sur-Seine, the posh suburb young Jérôme calls home.

1/27 Getting to 0. Aspect backwards.

Degrees of disaster.

Satellite's gone

up to the skies

Thing like that drive me

out of my mind

I watched it for a little while

I like to watch things on TV

[bong bong bong]

Satellite of love

[bong bong bong]

Satellite of love

[bong bong bong]

Satellite of love

Satellite of...

Sang the (Velvet) troubadour Lewis Allan Reed kan ya makan.

One big language.

However fancy we speak whatever tongue(s), to whatever degree, we're never post *d'oc*. Deep down we're still provincials – people of the Margins.

How do you know? 'Cause once upon a time, so they say, the word *trouvère* came from the Old French *trovere*, and-or from the Provençal word *trobaire*, meaning “to find or invent.” Yowza boss. Opportunism. Beats entrepreneurism every time, in the long run. Less resources needed and consumed. No profit margin or fixed costs. Minimal equipment. Extremely mobile physical plant. Hunt and gather. *Trobaire*. Leave a gentler footprint, but put your foot down firmly. Keep the ball of it hollow. One after the other. No need to muscle it. Let the ground move you. Use what you find. Use what you got.

Avoid three harms. Cultivate six harmonies.

Softly softly catchee monkey.

And sing!

So many jumping on the abandonment wagon.

Move as though through a viscous medium.

Straight but not straight. Round but not round.

Who can say what goes on within the walls of Financial Police headquarters in Paris where, according to the *Messenger*, “there was an unusual amount of activity for a Sunday, with police cars coming and going, some with sirens blaring”? It’s a 10-story building with bars on the windows of the fourth floor wherein young Jérôme be presently confin’d.

Asked for his reaction to the commotion, Michel Histel, 62, who lives down the street, said: “What is a little bit revolting to me is that people are attacking this young man (when) this bank has been playing with fire for a long time.”

Metro, bulot, dodo: a self-ironic figure of speech given in response to “How’s it going?” that roughly translates as: “Same old same old,” or more literally, “train, office, fall asleep.”

But no, this impoverishment of the senses did not apply to M. Bonhomme Jérôme. Who looks, spookily, a bit like Tom Cruise.

Applying a linguistic model, would it be possible to say that he traded in derivatives of the third degree? Or possibly even the fourth? Or is he himself perhaps a Clear? Finance, degree zero, on any scale.

(A beggar sits in front of a bank playing an accordion. There is a monkey sitting next to him as Inspector Clouseau walks up.) **Clouseau:** Do you have a

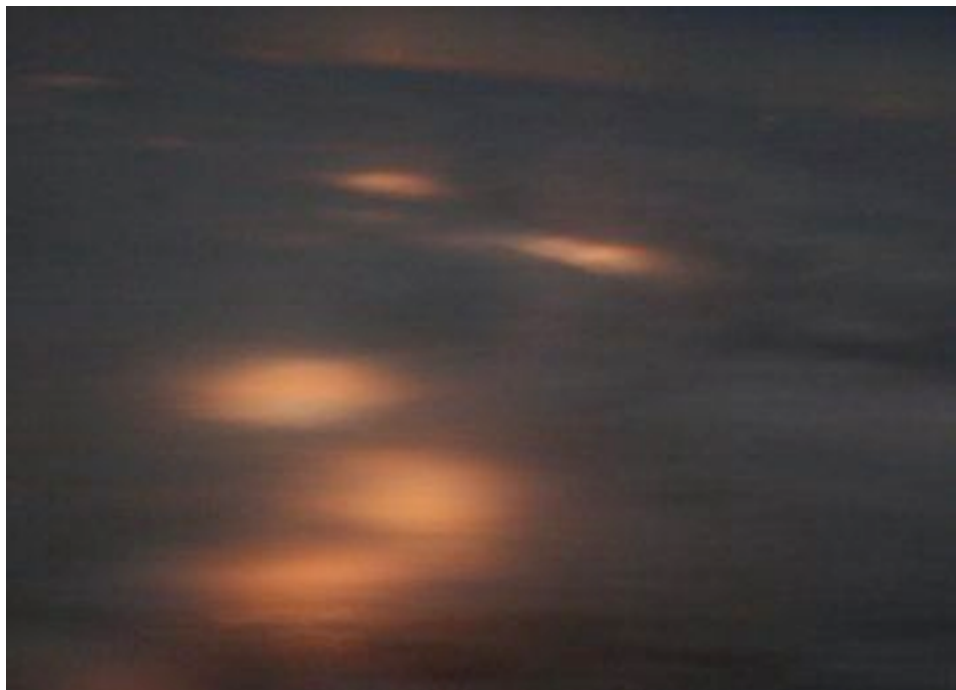
leesense? **Beggar:** What? **Clouseau:** City ordinance 147-B prohibits the playing of any musical instrument in a public place for the purpose of commercial enterprise without a proper *leesense*. **Beggar:** I don't understand. **Clouseau:** It is against the *leu* for you to play your musical instrument. **Beggar:** *Leu*? **Clouseau:** What? **Beggar:** You say, it's against the *leu*? **Clouseau:** Yes. Unless you have a proper *leesense*. **Beggar:** What kind of *leesense*? **Clouseau:** A *leesense* that permits the playing of any musical instrument in a public place for the purpose of commercial enterprise. **Beggar:** Commercial enterprise? **Clouseau:** Yes. You play that thing and people give you the *muhnay*. **Beggar:** People give the monkey the money. **Clouseau:** It is the same. **Beggar:** Oh, no. I am a musician and the monkey is a businessman. He doesn't tell me what to play, and I don't tell him what to do with his money. (*Through the window of the bank, we see that it is being robbed.*) One day I came home and I found him sitting in my living room. I let him stay, but he pays for his own room and board. **Clouseau:** Then the *minkey* is breaking the *leu*. **Beggar:** But he doesn't play any musical instrument. **Clouseau:** City ordinance 132-R prohibits the begging. **Beggar:** How do you know so much about city ordinances? **Clouseau:** What sort of stupid question is that? Are you blind? **Beggar:** Yes. **Clouseau:** ...Oh, yes, I see, yes... Well you happen to be talking to a police officer. And since I expect to be transferred back to the detective department at any moment, I will let you off with a warning...

At a certain point in the visual narrative, we, the audience, get an open shot

which reveals to us a crucial knowledge which, specifically, Clouseau cannot grasp: the blind man – who can see perfectly well – is the lookout for the holdup gang and the minkey... ah, perhaps the minkey is the mastermind of it all.

Si, si hombre.

A fortnight ago, a few degrees north of Darktown a fellow named Rick Stankiewicz took a night flight from Toronto to Thunder Bay. When the plane reached cruising altitude, he looked out his window, expecting to see “a blank slate of clouds.”



Stankiewicz believes that what he saw and photographed – a field of orange glowing patches – was light from towns spread across southwestern Ontario and “filtering through the cloud deck to my airplane window at 24,000 feet.” Amazed at

their number, within minutes he counted dozens. "There is no denying it," he wrote. "Society's beacons of light are also signposts of wasted energy and resources."

But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends – It gives a lovely light!

The sun dogs bark and the kosmos turns on and on.

1/28 Via A., le mot de jour: *Reconnaissance*. Depending on context either Gratitude, Recognition, Recon (as in scoping out a pro-vince prior to attempting conquest); or, legally, the acknowledgement of paternity.

It's a forlorn conclusion. Still, have a good rust of the day.

Le désouvrement. Unworking. Unwinding trades.

Unwinding rivers flowing

from the meadows to the sea,

Paths of glory

through shifting glades to fall...

Or as the (k)nitters say, when they find they dropped a stitch one row back or a thousand: "Got to frog it." Which is a play on "ribbit," the sound an anthropomorphized frog makes – onomatopoeia for "rip it" – to pull apart the garment, back to where the knots are sound.

You got to pick up every stitch,

you got to pick up every stitch,

two rabbits hopping in the ditch.

Oh no,

Must be the season of the witch...

Chanté le trouvère Donovan Leitch kan ya makan.

Just ahead of the Rat, great snows come to China.

Aha, the BBC describes the “out-of-control US spy satellite” as approximately “the size of a small bus.” The where and when of its return, as well as how much of the small bus will make it through the atmosphere, remains a matter of conjecture. Along with what might become of the material that presumably incinerates upon reentry. Give it time. As for the nature of the satellite’s physical composition, this is known, just not publicly said.

And in two days, Asteroid 2007 TU24 will zing by at around 1.4 lunar distances, roughly 335,000 miles, shining brightly enough to be spotted by backyard telescopes after nightfall in areas of low ambient light.

Irregularly-shaped, but some 250 meters across at its widest, TU24 could be described, without exaggeration, as being the size of a very large bus. Large enough, perhaps, to seat a whole festival’s worth of Deadheads.

Luna si, Yanqui no!

On the front page of the messenger *Messenger*, a photo of Ted Kennedy

endorsing Barak which makes it appear – because of their physical proximity and identically-hued blue suits – that the latter is growing, if not arising phoenix-like, out of the former.



Brendan Smialowski for The New York Times

Phoenix eats its ashes.

Hooked on phoenix.

Once upon a time, not so very long ago, a wealthy tradesman from Arabia traveled far and wide. In the course of his travels, he came upon a most wondrous city far to the north which its inhabitants called Lyon.

Now this wealthy tradesman, whose name was Buti Saeed al-Ghandi, and who had made his fortune as chief vizier to a mighty enterprise called Emirates Investment and Development, befriended the richest tradesmen of Lyon, and also its caliph, one Gérard Collomb, whose warmth made the Arabian stranger feel most welcome indeed. And when it came time for al-Ghandi to depart, he found that his heart had been captured by the ancient and lovely city, situated as it was near the convergence of two deep and strongly coursing rivers, the Rhône and Saône, and that he'd grown to love this place more than any woman he might take to wife.

The tradesman returned to his native land, but found that every day and night he pined for Lyon, and more and more it occupied his thoughts until he felt his heart might break with longing for it. And just at the moment when he was nearly given up to despair, he struck upon an idea. I am a rich and powerful man, he thought to himself. Why should I not build a Lyon in my own land to the south, the Land of Dubai?

And that is what he set about to do, enlisting to his aid the wealthy tradesmen of Lyon and also its caliph, Gérard Collomb, a tender-hearted and generous man who, touched by his friend's ardor to create a wondrous ancient city in the southern sands proclaimed: "We will give Dubai the soul of Lyon." The caliph of Lyon was, of course hoping too, that when the other wealthy tradesmen of Dubai saw even a tenth of the wonders of his city in their own land, that they would flock to Lyon and bring their gold, incense and myrrh to the banks of the rilling waters too. For he also had a dream: to transform the vast and crumbling old Hôtel-Dieu, a hospital with a glorious 18th-century facade, into a luxury hotel. "Its dome is majestic," he said, and who could disagree? "Maybe we'll seal a deal on the next visit."

Yet despite this amity and comety, there were some Lyonnaise who doubted that al-Ghandi could succeed, or suspected him of some unfriendly motive, and thus withheld their blessing. One such was a digger of shards and old stones, a certain Jacques Lasfargues, who ran a gallery of artifacts called The Museum of Gallo-Roman Civilization. "It's hard for me to imagine how you can capture the soul of the city," he protested to any who would hear him. "The color of the light here is tender, soft, sweet, like a painting of Turner. In the desert, the light is hard, brutal. The rivers – they are part of our soul. I prefer the ambience of Las Vegas. At least there's sincerity. One knows clearly what it is."

But the wealthy tradesman would not be deterred by such talk. Nor would his friend Caliph Collomb, who had heard about, and even seen moving pictures of the marvelous engineering feats achieved in the desert sands to the south. "Dubai already has built ski slopes and islands," he told the doubters. "And if you can do that, you can make rivers."

And now, we must to bed. And while you dream, dream of carpenters and stonemasons and a hundred thousand laborers of every craft raising a new Lyon where naught but dust once swirled. And see from a great height, as if riding a carpet upon the gentle winds, the great Rhône and Saône a-coursing at the city's feet.

One last thing, O Best Beloveds. Though he admits that he has taken liberties with the language of the tale, its essential facts he's left unembellished, and the actual words uttered by these men were copied by your faithful scribe, verbatim, from the pages of today's *Messenger* – and may Al-lah strike him dead if he lies.